

Endogamy in Easter Island

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INTRODUCTION

The study of the origin of each member of a couple gives a clear idea about the movement of a population. Due to its geographical isolation and its tiny size, Easter Island is a suitable place for the study of endogamy.

Since 1888, it has been a part of Chilean territory and is mainly inhabited by a Rapanui ethnic population. The census of 1992 indicates that its 2,764 residents live in Hanga Roa, in the western part of the island. In ancient times, the island was divided into areas and each belonged to a tribe or family group; the Rapanui people lived throughout the 166 km² that constitutes the island. Slave raids were responsible for the Rapanui's decimation in the 1860s. Most were captured and taken to Peru. Only a few returned to the island, but they didn't come back alone: smallpox, tuberculosis and venereal diseases wrecked havoc amongst the few inhabitants who had remained on the island, diminishing the population to only 111 inhabitants, from which today's population is descended. Missionaries who reached the island at the end of the last century confined the survivors to the present capital, the only inhabited place. Nowadays, land cannot be purchased by outsiders and can be occupied only with government authority and Rapa Nui approval (Lee 1990:49). On the other hand, almost the entire island periphery was declared National Park in 1935. At present, only small plots and some farms near Hanga Roa village exist, and these are dedicated to agriculture.

In March 1966, the Chilean Government created the Easter Island Department (Departamento de Isla de Pascua), dependent on Valparaíso province. It carried with it the installation of Public Services and infrastructure, as well as the arrival of the required civil servants. This event, beside the airport's construction in 1967, resulted in a rapid increase of people arriving on the island, predominantly mainland Chileans. Thus tourism began transforming the traditional way of life on the Island.

This fact isn't unique to Easter Island; islands with a well defined environment, a homogeneous cultural tradition and a population which has not migrated *en masse*, as well as having a significant geographical barrier, often demonstrate an important local endogamy index (Bestard 1986).

The aim of this work is to examine the degree of endogamy within the Rapanui population, as well as the evolution of endogamous and exogamous relationships from the beginning of present century until 1985.

IMPORTANCE OF MARRIAGE IN RAPANUI SOCIETY

In ancient times the legendary King Hotu Matu'a settled on Easter Island, and divided the land into equal shares between his descendants. This is a practice not uncommon in other Polynesian islands; e.g. in Hawai'i, this type of structure is also present (Sahlins 1992:17).

Political considerations aside, this division is still impor-

tant. The term "family" involves blood union; the only distinction of belonging to the same family is sharing the land (McCall 1994:68).

According to their cultural beliefs, the importance of marriage lay in the fact that a Rapanui had to marry to become an adult. However, it didn't take place by chance, in accordance with the feelings of both members in a couple. McCall (1994:85) is of the opinion that marriages were arranged by parents, who were in charge of choosing the appropriate partner for their offspring. This was already pointed out by Métraux (1971:109), who stated that the groom's father selected the bride for his son, especially when both parents had a friendly relationship and the groom's father was a chief.

Oral traditions seem to suggest that marriage essentially was monogamous, despite certain legends that some powerful men could take several wives. For the most part, a man of one group cohabited with a woman of another—usually rival—group (McCall 1994:84).

INCEST

In the case of an attraction between close relatives, such a relationship had to be rejected because it was considered incestuous (*kai toto*).

In order to understand its meaning in this context, another term must be considered: *taina*.¹ It combines different concepts such as sibling, cousin and even close friend. In short, a person to whom kinship ties exist. Marriage restrictions were that *taina* wouldn't be able to be married unless they were *taina haihai* (remote cousins). Relationships between brother-in-law and sister-in-law were considered incestuous; also marriage between second cousins was prohibited, but third cousins could get married² (Métraux 1971:108).

In this context, incest could be used as a deterrent. Thus, parents' ownership of land appears in the consideration of incest, according to their interests, so relationships that could have economic or land implications can be reaffirmed by marriage. This was demonstrated by McCall (1994:86). He tried to find the kinship relationship in a sample of 4,000 inhabitants, dead and alive. He discovered that many Rapanui who married without any impediments had several degrees of relationship. Thus he concluded that incest was used as an excuse by some parents who didn't agree with certain relationships of their offspring.

MARRIAGE CELEBRATION

In Easter Island, there are three types of marriage: civil, religious and traditional. Rapanui only consider as legitimate those marriages that include civil and religious ceremonies (McCall 1976:213). The traditional marriage celebration takes place after the civil and religious ceremonies. Food plays the most important role in this event: until all food has been eaten, the marriage isn't considered formalized.

Besides incestuous relations, another objection against the celebration of a marriage was the age of the future spouse. Rafael Edwards, Bishop and vicar in August 1916, states:

I recommend, *as far as possible*, that marriages between men younger than 20 years old and women younger than 17 are avoided.³

Nevertheless, according to data in registry books, marriages in which both spouses were younger than the recommended age were numerous, especially in the first half of the twentieth century.

Métraux states that marriages between children took place according to the same formalities as in adults, except that they were not allowed to live together until they reached a mature age. In the same way, marriage was not considered entirely valid until it was blessed by a priest. So, despite the Christianizing process beginning on the island in 1864, there wasn't a permanent Christian mission until 1934, and all unions had to wait until the frigate *Baquedano* arrived in order to be consecrated by the Captain.

In order to authorize marriages, Nicolás Pakarati (he was a catechizer, but not priest) will proceed in the way I have indicated to him and he will always go accompanied with another witness, who will be a Tepano or Juan Araki, Moisés Beriberi o Matías Hotu.⁴ (Rafael Edwards, Bishop and vicar).

Nowadays, despite the significance of marriage (96% of the population is Catholic⁵), the prevalence of cohabitation has considerably increased.

MATERIAL AND METHODS

In this work, the civil register (Registro Civil 1914-1985) has been used as an information source. Data from 1914 to 1985 have been collected. The total number of studied marriages is 508. Seven unions have been excluded because the birth place of one of the spouses wasn't recorded. Thus 501

marriages are considered in this study.

To value endogamy in a population, two methods can be used: crossing data of the birth places of both spouses or crossing the birth places of the spouses with those of their parents. The second one provides more valuable information than the first one (Junyent 1996:137). In this paper, only the birthplace of spouses is used due to the lack of data about the origin of parents.

Table 1. Birthplaces of both spouses.

BIRTHPLACES	MEN		WOMEN	
	N	%	N	%
Easter Island	392	78.24	416	83.03
Mainland Chile	95	18.96	78	15.56
Tahiti	1	0.19	2	0.39
France	5	0.99	1	0.19
United States	3	0.59	--	--
Germany	3	0.59	2	0.39
Argentina	--	--	2	0.39
Belgium	1	0.19	--	--
Spain	1	0.19	--	--
TOTAL	501	100.00	501	100.00

Although the record format changes several times from 1914 to 1985, the existing variables continue to be the same, so they don't have an effect on the collected information during the studied period.

The different birthplaces in the registry files are as follow: Easter Island, Chile⁶, Tahiti, France, United States, Germany, Argentina, Spain and Belgium (Table 1, Figure 1).

To calculate degree of endogamy, I have contrasted marriages in which both spouses were born in Easter Island, only one of them was born there, or neither of them born there. In this way, marriages are defined as follows (Diagram 1):

1. **endogamic**: both spouses were born in Easter Island.
2. **mixed**: one partner was born in Easter Island and the other one in mainland Chile or a foreign country.
3. **exogamic**: neither of the spouses were born in Easter Island, being both born in Chile or another country.

Diagram 1. Types of marriages.

Men / Women	Rapanui	Mainland	Other
Rapanui	endogamic	mixed	mixed
Mainland	mixed	exogamic	exogamic
Another	mixed	exogamic	exogamic

In order to compare the provenance of each spouse, matrices have been used. On the one hand, the period has been studied as a whole and afterwards, it has been divided into two parts: 1914-1965 and 1966-1985. In the middle of the sixties, larger social changes occurred in the island. To examine the evolution the degree of endogamy, the whole period has been divided into decades.

RESULTS

The birthplace of each partner has been traced. Considering men as well as women, most of them were born in Easter Island (78.24% for men and 83.03% for women). It is followed

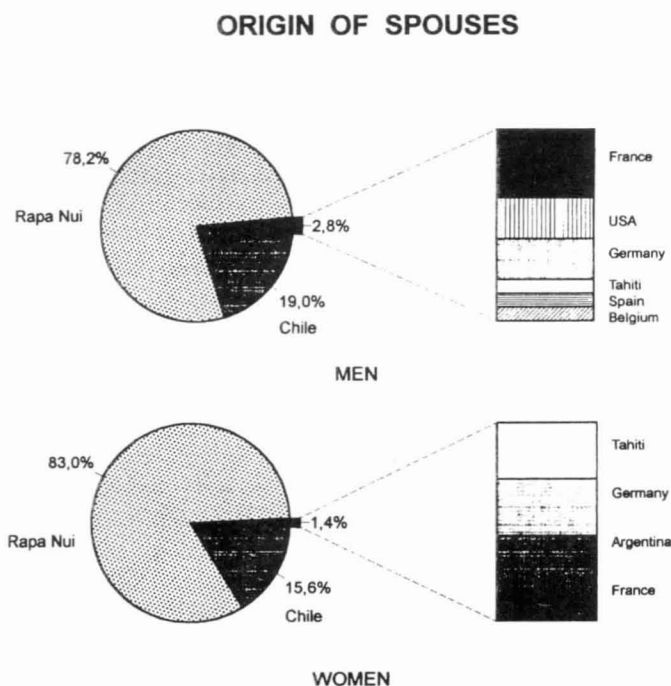


Figure 1. Birthplaces of both spouses.

in importance by mainland Chile, with values of 18.96% for men and 15.56% for women. There are other countries represented by very low values, less than 1% in all cases (Table 1). Males originating from foreign countries represent 2.79% of the total and females 1.39% (Figure 1).

In the time period 1914-1985, the records show the number of marriages celebrated during these years according to the origin of spouses (Table 3). Of the total of 501 recorded unions, 343 occurred in which both members of the couple were Rapanui. These marriages represent 68.46% of the total (Table 2). There were 34 marriages between Chileans, representing 6.78% of the total sample. Only in two cases were both spouses

Table 2. Matrix of birthplaces

Women	Men							
		Rapanui		Chilean		foreign		Total
		N	%	N	%	N	%	N
	Rapanui	343	68.46	61	12.17	12	2.39	416
	Chilean	44	8.78	34	6.78	-	-	78
	foreign	5	0.99	-	-	2	0.39	7
TOTAL	392	78.24	95	18.96	14	2.79	501	

Table 3. Matrix of countries of spouses during 1914-1985 period.

Women	Men									
	Rapa Nui	Chile	Tahiti	France	US	Germany	Argentina	Spain	Belgium	Total
	Rapa Nui	343	61	1	5	3	2	-	1	416
	Chile	44	34	-	-	-	-	-	-	78
Tahiti	2	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	2
France	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	1
USA	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Germany	1	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	-	2
Argentina	2	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	2
Spain	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Belgium	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
TOTAL	392	95	1	5	3	3	-	1	1	501

Table 4. Matrix of countries of spouses in 1914-1965 period.

Women	Men									
	Rapa Nui	Chile	Tahiti	France	US	Germany	Argentina	Spain	Belgium	Total
	Rapa Nui	255	1	1	1	-	-	-	-	258
	Chile	-	3	-	-	-	-	-	-	3
Tahiti	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1
France	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
USA	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Germany	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Argentina	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Spain	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Belgium	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
TOTAL	256	4	1	1	-	-	-	-	-	262

foreigners (0.39%). In one of these marriages, curiously both spouses came from different countries (Belgium male-French female), while the other one was celebrated between two Germans.

If the entire period studied is divided into two parts, there are 262 marriages between 1914-1965 (Table 4) and 239 between 1966-85. In the first stage, there are 255 marriages out of the total of 262 in which both spouses were born in Easter Island; in the second, there are 7, in which at least one of the partners comes from mainland Tahiti and France (Table 4).

Concerning the period 1966-1985 (Table 5), both spouses were Rapanui in only 88 of the total of 239 marriages. In this stage, there were 31 marriages between Chileans. In the rest, the birthplace of the male is mainland Chile, France, United States, Germany and Spain, and the birthplace of the females include the mainland, Tahiti, Germany and Argentina.

Table 6 shows the absolute values of marriages in decades, separately considering Rapanui, Chilean and foreign origins. From the 10-year period of 1966-75, marriages in which one of the spouses was not Rapanui began to increase, continuing this trend into the next decade.

The degree of endogamy is represented in percentages and absolute values (N). Included in the group 'foreign' are all those from alien countries, as well as mainland Chileans (Table

7). Until 1965, the presence of spouses of both sexes coming from outside is negligible, representing less than 6% of the total. However, from the 10-year period 1966-75, foreign male spouses represent 30.69% of the total, and for women this value is only 18.81%; clearly foreign males predominate in these figures. In the next decade, 1976-1985, these differences slightly decrease: foreign women represent 21.01% of the total and men, 28.26%. An important increase of marriages in which both members of the couple are foreign is observed: from 1.44% in 1946-1955 to 15.21% in 1976-1985.

The evolution in the degree of endogamy is shown in Figure 2 in percentages. Absolute and percentage values have also been calculated for endogamic, exogamic and mixed marriages in both periods (Figure 3; Table 8). In the first period (1914-1965), endogamic marriages are predominant (97.32%), and exogamic and mixed unions are negligible, with values lower than 2% in both cases. In the second period under consideration, an

important decrease in endogamic marriages is observed (36.82%), while mixed unions represent 49.37% and exogamic, 13.80%.

In the first period studied (1914-1965), the contribution of partners coming from countries other than Chile is globally sparse (Table 4): two male spouses, one from Tahiti and one from France, while only one Tahitian woman was married to a Rapanui.

During the second period (1966-1985), the geographical

Table 5. Matrix of countries of spouses in 1966-1985 period.

	Men									
	Rapa Nui	Chile	Tahiti	France	US	Germany	Argentina	Spain	Belgium	Total
Rapa Nui	88	60	-	4	3	2	-	1	-	158
Chile	44	31	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	75
Tahiti	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1
France	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	1
USA	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Germany	1	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	-	2
Argentina	2	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	2
Spain	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Belgium	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
TOTAL	136	91	-	4	3	3	-	1	1	239

Women

diversity of both spouses increases (Table 5). Again excluding Chile, most of the foreign men came from Europe⁸ (France, Germany and Spain) and United States. As for women, they came from Europe (France and Germany), Tahiti and Argentina.

At this point, the scarcity of Tahitian spouses must be mentioned. Despite their geographical 'proximity' (which is nearly equidistant: Tahiti is 4,000 km to the west, while Chile is 3,700

km to the east) and the same ethnic origin, only one Tahitian man and two Tahitian women married Rapanui during the 71 years of the studied period. Despite absolute values being very low, there are five males and one female spouse from France, for example, a country which is more distant than Tahiti, in spite of having a political relation with it.

It can be deduced from these results that immigration of both sexes has occurred mainly from the middle of the sixties onwards, being more pronounced in males than in females, particularly from 1965 to 1975 (30.69% in males and 18.81% in females; Table 7). This could be due to public service jobs that were created on Easter Island when it was incorporated into Valparaíso Province in 1966, and to the island being occupied

mainly by Chilean civil service, which was male dominated.

In 1976-1985, the presence of foreign female spouses increases and foreign male spouses slightly diminishes (Table 7). Despite the male presence continuing to be more important than female, the differences are reduced. At this point, there doesn't seem to be a civil service job-driven migration, so the arrival of foreigners is less selective.

Marriages in which both spouses originate from the mainland as well as foreign countries began an upward turn in 1946-1955 (only one was recorded, representing 1.44% of the total). From this time and consecutive decades on, a gradual increase becomes apparent (3.92% in 1956-65, 11.88% in 1966-75 and 15.21% in 1976-85). Between 1956-65 and 1966-75, these marriages triple in number. Besides new infrastructures created on the island at the end of the sixties, tourism begins to appear.

A preference exists in which both spouses have the same

Table 6. Endogamy by decades.

Year	both Rapanui	Rapanui-Chilean woman	Chilean man-Rapanui	both Chilean	Rapanui-foreign woman	foreign man-Rapanui	both foreigners	Total
1914-	64	-	-	-	1	2	-	67
1926-	28	-	-	-	-	-	-	28
1936-	47	-	-	-	-	-	-	47
1946-	68	-	-	1	-	-	-	69
1956-	48	-	1	2	-	-	-	51
1966-	39	17	28	12	2	3	-	101
1976-	49	27	32	19	2	7	2	138
TOTAL	343	44	61	34	5	12	2	501

DISCUSSION

The study of birthplaces is interesting in order to know the geographic mobility of a population. Thus, the origin of spouses from places other than Easter Island can give us information about the degree of endogamy. Despite the fact that the sample is not very large (501 marriages), it must be considered that it is a small population in which, due to its religious and cultural beliefs, marriage has a great significance. Matrices with the origin of both spouses (Tables 3, 4 and 5) highlight the evolution of their origins.

Excluding those born on Easter Island, it is observed that men display a higher geographical mobility than women (Table 1, Figure 1).⁷ Similarly, excluding mainland Chile (second in importance with regard to the origin of spouses), the diversity of countries from which foreign men originate is higher than that for women (six countries as opposed to four).

Table 7. Endogamy degree.

	both Rapanui		foreign woman-Rapanui		foreign man-Rapanui		both foreigners		
Year	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	TOTAL
1914-	64	95.52	1	1.49	2	2.98	-	-	67
1926-	28	100.00	-	-	-	-	-	-	28
1936-	47	100.00	-	-	-	-	-	-	47
1946-	68	98.55	-	-	-	-	1	1.44	69
1956-	48	94.11	-	-	1	1.96	2	3.92	51
1966-	39	38.61	19	18.81	31	30.69	12	11.88	101
1976-	49	35.50	29	21.01	39	28.26	21	15.21	138
TOTAL	343	68.46	49	9.78	73	14.57	36	7.18	501

ENDOAMY DEGREE

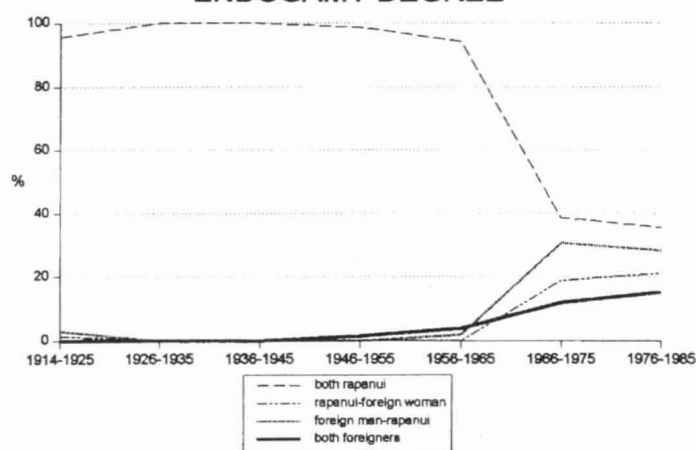


Figure 2. Evolution of degree of endogamy.

origin (e.g., both mainland Chile or both Rapanui). This seems to suggest the results of the present work, in which a high proportion of marriages show that both spouses have the same origin. This is the case of marriages celebrated between mainland Chileans. Until 1965, they only represent 1.14% of the total of marriages celebrated in the island (3 as opposed to 262), increasing considerably to 12.97% (31 out of 239 marriages) from 1966 onwards (Tables 4 and 5).

The evolution in time of the degree of endogamy seems to suggest a sharp change in the middle of the sixties when the arrival of immigrants, mainly mainland Chilean, was very pronounced. Results in Figure 2 can be illustrative. An almost rectilinear progression until 1956-65 can be observed. At the end of this period, endogamic marriages decrease remarkably, falling from almost 100% to values below 40%. In the same way, the other unions increase in number, the most apparent being those between foreign males and Rapanui women (moving from 1.96% to 30.69%). These values seem to stabilize at the end of the period studied.

As a curiosity, two of the three marriages celebrated be-

tween American males and Rapanui women took place in 1969 and 1970, coinciding in time with American male presence on the island due to the airport construction.⁹

CONCLUSION

Endogamy studies can highlight important data about the evolution of a population. In the case of Easter Island, its geographical isolation has been a significant parameter in its analysis.

The results seem to suggest a marked endogamy, specially during the period in which its only connection with the mainland was by sea once a year. When geographical mobility increased due to the airplane, migratory movements in both directions led to an increase of mixed and exogamic marriages, implying a decrease in endogamy. Added to this, the political

changes that incorporated Easter Island into Valparaíso Province in the second half of the sixties emphasized the sharp changes that took place.

Another important factor to be considered in order to gain a better understanding of the high degree of endogamy observed until the middle of the sixties is that the Rapanui population was subjected to colonial domination, and was not allowed to leave the island (Porteous 1981:170; Griffiero 1997:66). This barrier to outside contact forced the men and

TYPES OF MARRIAGES

1914-1965 / 1966-1985 periods

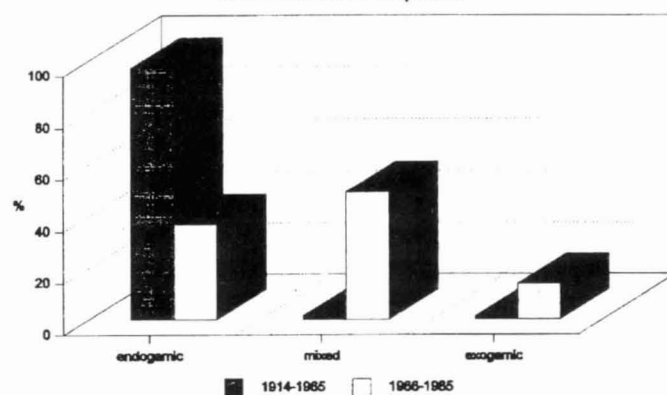


Figure 3. Types of marriages in periods 1914-1965 and 1966-1985.

women living on Rapa Nui to find partners predominantly from within their own population. This situation persisted until 1964.

At the end of the last century, several progeny from mixed unions were born on the island. Some of the surnames introduced to the island thus include Pont (France) and Edmunds (England), whose descendants have reproduced within a small population group. Bearing in mind that this took place towards the end of the nineteenth century and the beginning of the twentieth, by 1914—the year of the start of the present study—their offspring born on Easter Island are considered to be Rapanui. McCall (1997:114-115) mentions 33 patronymics

Table 8. Number and rate of endogamic mixed and exogamic marriages in both studied periods.

	Endogamic		Mixed		Exogamic	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
1914-1965	255	97.32	4	1.52	3	1.14
1966-1985	88	36.82	118	49.37	33	13.80
TOTAL	343	68.46	122	24.35	36	7.18

in the island, and these surnames are included in that number.

As the millennium draws to a close, what is the outlook for endogamic marriages on Rapa Nui? Perhaps due to the social changes that the Rapanui population is experiencing, it could be very difficult to find Rapanui men and women who marry each other, because mixed relations are increasing. In fact, results from this work seem to suggest that it will become more and more difficult.

What are the implications for Rapanui culture if endogamic marriages continue to decrease while the others increase? The most immediate result could be the disappearance of Rapanui surnames, a signal of identity in their culture. But this subject will remain for further studies.

FOOTNOTES

- ¹ Métraux translates *taina* as cousins.
- ² Brother and sister were two degrees apart, first cousins were four degrees, second cousins six degrees and third cousins eight degrees (Métraux 1971:108).
- ³ Translated from Spanish
- ⁴ Tepano is a Rapanui surname translated from Spanish
- ⁵ Source: Church Census of 1984.
- ⁶ Despite Easter Island belonging to Chile politically, the use of the terms Mainland Chilean or Mainland are used to distinguish geographical separation and the consequent genetic implications rather than having any political connotation.
- ⁷ In the discussion of the results, it is assumed that the probability of a foreign man or woman marrying an islander is the same.
- ⁸ Moorehead pointed out the effects of Europeans in South Pacific, specially, France, Great Britain and Germany (Porteous, 1981:4).
- ⁹ Despite the fact that the construction of Mataverí airport finished in 1967, some enlargements were made in 1989-90, by virtue of an agreement between Chile and United States, to allow the landing of NASA space-shuttle in case of emergency (Santa Coloma, 1995).

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FAR HORIZONS

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For information regarding the trip, contact
Far Horizons: (800) 552-4575; fax (505) 343-8076